

Look on my works ...."

"Ozzie, David and Ricky just called from the malt shop. Do you really owe \$11.00 for banana splits? No wonder you're such a colossal wreck."

"My name is Ozymandias, king of ...."

"Ozzie, now the grass is dying in front, too. What will the neighbors say? Can't you do something? It's not like you held down a regular job, you just sit around the house in your cardigan."

"My name is Oz...."

"Ozzie, don't frown and wrinkle your lip that way. It looks like you've got gas."

Boundless and bare the level lawn stretches far away.

### Folding The Panties

The washwater blond said that no self-respecting man would do his own laundry much less a woman's.

I rehearsed some face saving lines:

My wife is ill.

My old lady's sick.

My tramp is on the skids.

She interrupted, my excuses hung there edgewise:

Your woman's not home, neither, she said.  
Out with a real man, that's where she is  
and you with every panty she owns right  
there in your basket.

I smiled politely, strolled outside, sprinted for a phone.

She was there alright, the crafty bitch. But I smelled the whiskey on her breath, heard the bed slosh and then more pairs of boots hit the floor than I cared to count.

### On The Horn

You know the kind of day: till 3:00 a.m. with The Hooch and then up at 7:00 with The Fear. Even Miller's doesn't seem to be working this morning and I hate like hell to start the day with a Ramos Fizz

because I've taken The Reader's Digest quiz and I know what that means.

So I'm wandering around the house throwing up on my feet like a prince of a fellow when someone calls and lays waste my last name. I thought I'd heard them all: Kurch, Kohurchy, Kurtgah, and Kerchoo. but I've never heard anything like this.

It pisses me off, but while I'm looking among the pools of old booze in my brain for a smart-assed remark, he tells me what he wants:

The University of Southern California is having a month-long festival of the arts.. There will be music, dance, painting, mime, puppetry, and poetry.

"And when would you like to read, Ron?"

"How much are you paying?"

"We're not paying."

"I don't want much, but I've been betting on horses lately that drag themselves right off the track and into the Alpo can."

"We can't pay anybody, Koerzxjo. Everybody's volunteered so far. Do you really think you're better than ...." And then he lists some good people but also a collection of scumbags who publish each other's stuff and then put out anthologies of it called Whom's Who In Poems.

But I want to get off the horn and throw up in the toilet for a change because my feet are beginning to stick to the rug, so I say, "Okay, okay. I'll do it if I can read with somebody I know."

Now that's a good idea. First of all it's an excuse to go out for a few drinks afterward and second of all it's terrible to go to those things alone. I used to imagine that the nymphomaniacs tearing at their underwear would drown out the moaning virgins who had drowned out my deep, masculine voice.

What really happens is that you read, listen to the fishy looks, get a limp handshake or two and then stand there in the sun with the new editor of Menses Quarterly.

"You'd read alone, a different poet every day; I've got you down for a Monday morning."

Oh, Jesus. With a head like the "Hindenburg" the kind of shakes a Studebaker gets at 95 and two English I classes sitting there shoving pins in UCLA dolls.

"I can't do it, man. I'm sorry."

So it started: he called me mercenary and pig-headed and said that from now on my name was shit in this town. So I said that if my name was Shit, he'd pronounce it Shirt or Short.

And then he said something and then I said something and then I held the phone away from my ear like a mother-in-law joke and then I hung up.

I felt awful. Worse than before. And I knew I had two choices. I could call my mother or I could have a couple of drinks.

Now Locklin has told me more than once that it's never smart to call your mother, so I had a short one and then one a little longer. I was starting to get well when the phone rang.

"It's Gerry Locklin," he said, "It was either you or my mother."

"Trouble in Long Beach?"

"Out of the fucking blue. I was just sitting here having a fifth of Beaujolais to get my eyes open and the phone rang.

"Some culture-hustler on the line and the first thing he said was, 'Is this Mr. Lapland? Mr. Gary Lapland?"

"Ron, from then on it was downhill all the way."

#### No Visible Means Of Support

The two blind students who are in love meet in the center of the drive,

canes tucked under their arms like crutches.